



SECTION 504 GRIEVANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Policy

It is the policy of the Orange County Public School District to provide a learning and working environment free from discrimination. To that end, the District requests students, parents and staff to assist the Superintendent and the School Board in identifying barriers to a discrimination free environment in our schools. The following Grievance Procedure is provided as an avenue for expeditious processing of complaints toward the elimination of unlawful discrimination.

Definitions

Grievance: a complaint alleging a violation of any policy, procedure or practice which would be prohibited by Section 504 and other federal and state civil rights law, rules and regulations.

Section 504: the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Grievant(s): a student, parent, guardian or employee of the Orange County Public School District who submits a grievance.

Section 504 Coordinator: the employee designated to coordinate the District's efforts to comply with equity regulations and facilitate processing of complaints.

Day: a working day; the calculation of days in grievance processing shall exclude Saturdays, Sundays and school holidays.

Procedure

- LEVEL I: An individual with a complaint is encouraged to first discuss the issue with the teacher, counselor or administrator involved with the objective of resolving the matter promptly and informally.
- LEVEL II: If the complaint is not resolved at Level I, the grievant may file a written grievance. Such claims must be made in writing and filed with the district's Section 504 compliance coordinator: Harriet P. Brown, Esquire, Director, ESE Policy & Procedures.
- The Grievance must state: 1) the nature of the grievance; 2) the remedy requested; and 3) be signed and dated by the grievant. The grievance must be filed within 15 days of the event or incident. The Coordinator has the authority to investigate all written grievances and attempt to resolve the complaint. If the complaint is not resolved at Level II, the coordinator will prepare a written report, which will be submitted to the superintendent and the grievant.
- LEVEL III: If a hearing is requested by the grievant, the Coordinator will appoint a hearing officer who will conduct the hearing within 15 days after the request is received.
- A hearing officer shall give the parent or student full and fair opportunity to present evidence relevant to the issues raised under the grievance. The parent or student may, at their own expense, be assisted or represented by individuals of his or her own choice, including an attorney. The district's hearing officer shall make his/her decision in writing within 15 days after the hearing.
- LEVEL IV: If the parent or student disagrees with the decision of the hearing officer, an appeal may be filed with the Orange County School Board which will render a decision within 30 days of the appeal.
- At any time during this process, a grievant may file a complaint with the U.S. Office for Civil Rights, Southern Division, Atlanta office at 404-562-6450.